

The Home Missionary, vol. 2

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
1890	3
November 1890	3
“What the Church Owes the World” The Home Missionary Extra 2.	3

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E. J. Waggoner

The church of Christ occupies a peculiar position in the world. Its members are comparatively few, and are mostly poor; for God has chosen the poor of this world (*James 2:5*), and not many wise men after the flesh, not many might, not many noble are called (*1 Corinthians 1:26*); yet this poor, despised company, whose only legacy from this world is tribulations and afflictions (read *John 15:19-21; 16:33; 1 Thessalonians 3:3*) owe to the world a debt which can scarcely ever think of it. The sentiment which finds expression in the blunt statement, “The world owes me a living,” has insidiously crept into the church, and has affected to a great degree many of its members who are perhaps unconscious of it. But such a sentiment as this is directly opposite to the spirit of Christ—the spirit that must be in every one of his true followers. Let us together read some of the scriptures which set before us our true relation to the world.*HOMI November 1890, page 11.1*

In *1 John 2:6* we read these words: “He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he [Christ] walked.” True Christians are those who abide in Christ; for those that do not abide in Christ, are cast forth, and are gathered to be burned. *John 15:6*. The word “ought” implies something owed; therefore the members of Christ’s church owe it to him to walk as he walked. They cannot walk otherwise, as long as they abide in him; and if they walk otherwise while professing to abide in him, they bear false witness against Christ.*HOMI November 1890, page 11.2*

Now what was Christ’s life here on earth? He himself tells us: “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.” *Matthew 20:28*. He gave himself for the world; he offered himself as a servant to the world. Therefore if we abide in him, walking as he walked, we shall likewise consider ourselves servants to all.*HOMI*

November 1890, page 11.3

This shows that all Christ's followers must be servants; but the question arises, What do we owe? It is evident that each one owes just what he has received. What, then, have we received? We have received the riches of the grace and mercy of God. The apostle Paul tells us that in Christ, the Beloved, "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." *Ephesians 1:7*. Again he says: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." *Ephesians 2:4-7.HOMI November 1890, page 12.1*

To the Romans, also, he writes that we have received "abundance of grace." *Romans 5:17.HOMI November 1890, page 12.2*

Turn now to the words written by the apostle Peter: "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever." *1 Peter 4:10, 11.HOMI November 1890, page 12.3*

The gift which we have received is the gift of grace, and we have received it freely and abundantly; and as we have received it, so are we to minister the same to others. "No man liveth to himself." We have received the gift, not for our own exclusive benefit, but only as stewards, that we may as freely distribute it as we have received it. This is in harmony with our Lord's injunction to the twelve when he sent them out the first time: "Freely ye have received, freely give." *Matthew 10:8.HOMI November 1890, page 12.4*

Of course we cannot of ourselves impart to others the grace of God; but we can become workers together with God by making known to others that which we have heard and seen and received. As

ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech men by us, we are to pray them, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. *2 Corinthians 5:20*. The command of the Spirit is, "And let him that heareth say, Come." *Revelation 22:17*. *HOMI November 1890, page 12.5*

One of the ways in which we can work with Christ in discharging our debt to the world, is by giving of our means. This is in the direct line of Peter's injunction to minister to others the grace of Christ, which we have received, for the apostle Paul says: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." *2 Corinthians 8:9*. He counted not the riches and glory of heaven a prize to be grasped and held for his own use, although they were his by right; but he divested himself, and took upon him the form of a servant. (See *Philippians 2:4-7*.) *HOMI November 1890, page 12.6*

Jesus gave all the wealth of heaven for the redemption of the world. He became poor, that he might make others rich. He was under no obligation to do this; but we who have received the gift, and who have nothing that we have not received (*John 15:5; 1 Corinthians 4:7*), owe all we have to Christ; and since he has given himself and all that he possessed to the world, it follows that what we owe to Christ we owe to the world. We give to Christ by giving to carry the message of his grace to the world. *HOMI November 1890, page 12.7*

That we owe all that we have is evident from the apostle Paul's words in *1 Corinthians 6:19, 20*: "Ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price;" that price being "the precious blood of Christ." *1 Peter 1:18, 19*. If we are not our own, then of course nothing that we have is our own. All that we have we owe, in Christ, to the world, that they may learn of the riches of his grace. There was a time in the history of the church when not one of the members said that ought of the things which he possessed was his own (see *Acts 4:31-33*); and that was a time of great power in proclaiming the message, and of wonderful growth in the church, because "great grace was upon them all." If every one who professes to be Christ's in these days would consider that neither he nor his property is his own, but that he owes all to Christ and to his last message to the

world, might we not expect that the message would be given with great power?*HOMI November 1890, page 12.8*

We may be poor in this world's goods, yet this does not relieve us from responsibility. We have on record for our example the churches in Macedonia, "How that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." Even beyond their power they were willing of themselves; and this they did because they "first gave their own selves to the Lord." *2 Corinthians 8:1-5*. Let it not be overlooked that this was the result of the grace of God bestowed on them. (See *verse 1*.) From their example we may learn how we may be counted "good stewards of the manifold grace of God."*HOMI November 1890, page 12.9*

We have already learned that Christ came into the world to minister as a servant, and that as followers of him we owe our service. Now we read what he says of his disciples, in his last recorded prayer for them. *John 17:18*: "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." Our work, therefore, is the same as his. What a wonderful thought, that we are permitted to do a part of the same work that Christ came to do! Now turn to *John 18:37*, and read his words concerning why he came into the world: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." Then since we are sent into the world as he was sent into the world, we owe to the world a perfect testimony, both by word and practice, concerning the truth. Christ, who is the truth, says to his people, "Ye are my witnesses."*HOMI November 1890, page 12.10*

We are Christ's representatives here on earth, to carry forward in the world the work which he began. The world has no means of knowing Christ except through his representatives. In his prayer for his disciples, Christ said further: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." *John 17:20, 21*.*HOMI November 1890, page 13.1*

Very emphatic testimony as to our duty to the world is borne by the

apostle Peter. Read *1 Peter 2:9-12*: “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises [or excellencies] of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light; which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation [that is, you course of life] honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.” *HOMI November 1890, page 13.2*

It is for this purpose that Christ has called us to be his servants, that we should show forth his excellencies, and by our good works lead others to glorify him. Therefore we owe to the world a perfect example of honest and goodness; in short, we owe them a perfect image of Christ. *HOMI November 1890, page 13.3*

As Christ has called us into his marvelous light, it is that we may reflect that light to the world. He is the Light of the world (*John 8:12*); but since the world cannot see him, they must learn of the light from those to whom he has committed it. So he says: “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” *Matthew 5:14-16. HOMI November 1890, page 13.4*

In order to discharge this debt, it is not necessary for Christians to keep calling attention to their own attainments. Christ uttered these words as a direct rebuke to the Jews, who were God’s chosen generation to show forth his excellencies, and who held themselves aloof from the world, and boasted about the great light which God had given to them “as a people.” But their light had become darkness, just as will be the case with any light that is shut up. Light does not make a noise; it simply shines *in the darkness*. A light is of no value unless it shines where the darkness is. So God wants his people to mingle with the world, not of it, nor conforming to it; but

letting the light which they have received from heaven shine clearly and steadily. Are there not many Seventh-day Adventists who in their desire “to get among Seventh-day Adventists who in their desire “to get among Sabbath-keepers,” are letting their light almost, if not quite, go out in some large church, and robbing the world of the light which God designed that they should give in the community where he had placed them?*HOMI November 1890, page 13.5*

These two points, namely, that it is by *doing*, rather than by *talking*, that we are to let our light shine; and that it is to shine *in the world*, and not in some sheltered nook in which we may hide, are very clearly put by the apostle Paul in *Philippians 2:14, 15*: “Do all things without murmurings and disputings; that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, *in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation*, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.”*HOMI November 1890, page 13.6*

This, then, is what the church, not “as a people,” simply, but as individuals, owes to the world. Each one owes his property, to be used just as fast and in just such ways as the needs of the cause of Christ demand; each one owes a godly example, a life free from impatience, murmuring, or disputing; in short, each one owes himself, with all that is intrusted to him. Shall we now, then, with a sense that we, no less than the apostle Paul, are debtors to all men (*Romans 1:14*), hold ourselves and our means subject to God’s call? Nay, rather with the feeling of one who cannot rest easy under unpaid debts, shall we not eagerly say, “Here am I; send me,” or use me in any way that will advance thy cause? When the individual members of the church shall with united hearts arouse to a sense of their obligation, and in the fear of God begin to pay the debt they owe to the world, the message will go with a loud cry, and the unearned reward will soon be given.*HOMI November 1890, page 13.7*

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